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# ORATION

DELIVERED BY

LIEUT. COLONEL W. R. ROBERTS,

AT THE GREAT

## FENIAN DEMONSTRATION,

IN

JONES' WOOD, NEW-YORK,

ON

TUESDAY, JULY 25TH, 1865.

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And shall we bear and bend forever,  
And shall no time our bondage sever,  
And shall we kneel, but battle never  
For our own native land.  
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NEW-YORK:

Published at the Office of the Trades Advocate.

166 WILLIAM STREET,

1865.

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# ORATION

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LIEUT.-COLONEL W. R. ROBERTS,

AT THE

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*Fellow-Countrymen and Brothers :*

Your partiality, more than your good judgment, has placed me to-day in a position, that I wish were occupied by a better and an abler man ; accustomed to the practical pursuits of mercantile life, I am ill qualified to entertain you with beautiful figures of rhetoric, or flights of the imagination, which however valuable they may be to an orator or a poet, are worse than useless when judged by the rules of multiplication or addition, and are neither pleasing nor profitable on the balance sheet of a ledger. And though, on ordinary occasions of speech-making, these qualities may be useful and entertaining, I am not sorry if on this occasion I lack these great essentials, for the time and the occasion needs plain common-sense talk, and plain practical measures ; we require facts not fancy, dollars as well as sympathy, muskets not advice, and bullets in place of words. We need, my friends, stern and determined men, and generous and brave hearts, who, when the hour of trial comes, will prove their faith and love by deeds ; will be free with their means and self-reliant in the justness of their cause, and their own right arms. [*Loud cheers.*]

Had I no other motive than that of your gratification, or my own inclination, I would not be here to-day, speaking, or taking part in this demonstration, but I have other motives, and other purposes in addressing you. The time has come when every Irishman who loves his country and believes in the ultimate independence of his native land, must take his place beside the Fenian Brotherhood, in asserting that Irish Liberty can only be won by fighting for it. [*Great cheering.*] The time has come when Irishmen must take sides, and those who are not with us, are against

us. Cowardly doubts and timidity must give place to courage, and confidence in ourselves and our power; it will not do to say I would sacrifice my life for Ireland, if it would save her; I would spend my last dollar in her cause, if it would do her any good, when you will neither give, nor assist those who are giving the one, and will risk the other. [*Loud cheers.*] The man who holds back now, shrinking and doubtful, is no warm lover of his land, and his patriotism is like the poor Irishman's blanket, too short at one end, and not long enough at the other. [*Loud laughter and cheers.*]

Though an humble and unassuming member of the Fenian Brotherhood, the position that I occupy in it is one that enables me, nay of necessity compels me, to have a knowledge of all its machinery, its strength, its hopes, and its prospects; and I could tell you much that would cheer every true Irish heart, and advance the cause with the cold and the unbelieving outside the organization, but it would be not alone imprudent but criminal in me to do so, as the ears of our enemy are long and open, her spies are about even in this very city, perhaps in this very crowd. And though much her press pretend to sneer at the movement, I assure you the British government has a very different opinion of it, and well she may, for she is beginning to hear the rumbling of the storm that will shake, if not destroy, her rotten old hulk from stem to stern.

Ah, she little thought when hunting the Irish children from their homes and country, with her cruel and unjust laws, and her brutal and unfeeling execution of them, she was but placing them where they could one day furnish the means of redeeming their country and avenging her martyrs; she little thought that her extermination was but rejuvenation; and that the wild geese who crossed the Atlantic would one day return with the sinews of war; and the genius for conducting it, to enable their brothers at home to make the most heroic struggle that has been made since the days of Clontarf, and which they have since proved themselves capable of making on the battle-fields of Europe and America, when well equipped and well led. And then what a special dispensation of Providence there seems in affording a school for mili-

tary training and experience to Irishman in the late unhappy war. We all know how they have availed themselves of it. The Fenian Brotherhood means to avail itself of them; and I know they are but too anxious to use their dearly bought experience for the benefit and in the cause of their own cherished native land. If asked when can you be ready to go, the answer invariably is, in an hour if necessary. Believe me when the blow is struck, there will be no Ballingarrys or Slievenamons. England this time will not meet a handful of undisciplined, unarmed men, led by a true-hearted, high-souled, self-sacrificing, but unfit man—poor Smith O'Brien. No, she will have to meet—well, I wont say what, for it would be giving her information. She will see when the time comes. In the late American troubles England played her old game to divide and destroy. How ready she then was to use her power in the struggle, so as to enable the weaker to hold out against the stronger, until there would not be as much left of the national life as there was of the Kilkenny cats;—not that she loved the South, but that she hated and feared both North and South. I wonder if she is as ready to take offence now. [*Cries of "No, no," and laughter.*] I rather think if Brother Jonathan should pull her nose, and squeeze it well in so doing, she would be disposed to look upon the act as a friendly intimation that it wanted blowing, and would blow it accordingly, to please her dear American cousin, for blood is thicker than water you know: and now that her fears induce her to claim kindred, we may expect to hear the whole relationship cast up, although a few months ago the Americans were nothing but uncivilized savages; but all this will be remembered for a final and grand reckoning; and I hazard nothing in saying to-day, that nineteen-twentieths of the American people hate and despise England as thoroughly as the Irish ever did. The feelings engendered by the Revolution of 1776 were passing away; but the devilish perfidy and baseness of England in seeking to engulf the American ship, when struggling and straining in the tempestuous sea of a gigantic civil war, will never be forgotten while a plank of Liberty remains in this Republic, and an American citizen to stand by it. [*Loud and continued cheers.*]

Now, fellow-countrymen, is it not reasonable to suppose that when the Irish Republic—[*loud and uproarious cheering again and again*, when Mr. Rogers, State Centre, stepped forward on the rostrum and called for three more for the Irish Republic, which were repeated until the whole vast assemblage seemed wild with enthusiasm]—when the Irish Republic has her auxiliary bureaus of finance, of war and of the navy here, just as the South had in England, Nassau and Canada—which, by the way, we could make short work of, if President Johnson thinks the Blue Noses would be worth the taking—and unless to deprive England of an ally and America of an enemy, I don't think them worth the having. Is it not a fair supposition that the Irish Republican government will find as liberal friends among the Americans—not to mention the Irish-Americans—as the South found in Canada and England? I think the navy bureau alone will have its hands full in equipping cruisers like the Florida, the Alabama, the Tennessee, and the Stonewall; the names will be different, we will have the Robert Emmet, [*loud cheers*,] the Edward Fitzgerald, [*prolonged cheers*,] the Brothers Shears, and the Wolfe Tone. [*Enthusiastic cheers*.] They will all be called after Irish martyrs, so that their names when dead will strike more terror into British hearts than even when living; for their blows will be aimed at the most vulnerable and vital part of Britain, her commerce. [*Loud cheers*.] Of course I expect that our practical common sense plebian President, Andy Johnson, will follow the example of her most ungracious Majesty Queen Victoria, and declare the Irish Republic a belligerent. [*Loud cheers*.] English vessels of war will receive notice to quit American ports twenty-four hours after arrival, should they think it prudent to arrive here at all, lest their crews—many of whom are Irish—would forget to return; and if they are lucky enough to get off with their ships, I will guarantee them the most hearty groans and other expressions of tenderness that ever yet assailed the ears of British cut-throats. [*Loud cheers*.] We will not ask any more partiality from the American government or from our American fellow-citizens than England extended to the Southern people, who hooted the Prince of Wales in the streets



of Richmond in 1860. And may God bless them for showing their contempt for the descendant of tyrants. [*Great cheers.*] I am told, on excellent authority, that he was greeted with the music of melodious fish-horns lately on the banks of the Liffey. May God bless those fish-horns, too, and the lips that blew them. [*Roars of laughter.*] And though it may seem like profanation to ask such a thing for a tin trumpet, still, if they gave the first notes of the awakening sense of the Irish people, to their shame and national degradation, they deserve a blessing, and they have mine. [*Cries of And ours, And ours, and Amen, Amen, and cheers.*]

Nearly seven hundred years ago the foot of the English invader first polluted the soil of Ireland, and since then what a history is hers; who can read it without sorrowing over the divisions, the jealousies, the blindness of her chiefs? Who can study it without drawing wisdom, strenght, and toleration from its pages and teachings? Pope Adrian, they say, gave the English King permission to occupy and govern the country, on condition that the Church received its revenue called Peter's pence from the lands and tenements, but this is disputed, and I think with justice, for it seems impossible that the Pope could place the faithful children of the Irish Church in the political power of a reprobate and villain like Henry the Second, the grandson of a bastard, the husband of a divorced strumpet, remarkable for her debaucheries, but who brought him one-fourth of France as a marriage portion, the seducer of his son's affianced bride, the murderer of the Archbishop of Canterbury, Thomas á Becket, and the relentless enemy of Pope Alexander the Third; it seems impossible, therefore, that the Pope could place the holy and enlightened ministers of the Irish Church and their flocks in the power of such a monster, though Pope Adrian being an Englishman and a subject of Henry, may have viewed it in a different light from Pope Lucius the Third, who positively refused to confirm or sanction Henry's usurpations. At all events, whether the Pope's Bulls were forged or no, the Church has paid dearly for it since—her lands confiscated, her monasteries in ruins, her temples desecrated, her priests hunted and prices set upon their heads like wolves or mad dogs; yet some of their

successors to-day seem strangely forgetful of the past, and blind to the future; they appear to forget who stood by them in danger and sheltered them in distress, who fought for their faith and supported with a generous and open hand, out of scant means, the Soggarth whom they loved and the friend whom they trusted. [*Loud cheers, and cries of True for you.*]

“Loyal and brave to you,  
Soggarth Aroon.  
Yet, no slave to you,  
Soggarth Aroon.  
Nor out of fear to you,  
Stand up so near to you,  
Och! out of fear to you,  
Soggarth Aroon.

“Why not her poorest man,  
Soggarth Aroon.  
Try and do all he can,  
Soggarth Aroon.  
Ireland’s commands to fill,  
Of his own heart and will,  
Side by side with you still,  
Soggarth Aroon.” [*Loud cheers.*]

Some of them also seem to forget the race they sprung from, and the profession they belong to. Called to look after our spiritual salvation, they assume a political protectorate, unworthy of their descent, and inconsistent with their calling. Politics and religion, my friends, are strange bed-fellows, and rest uneasily under one covering; the former is sure to have the whole of the blankets, while religion is left, neglected and forgotten, to shiver in the cold, if not positively kicked out of bed altogether.

We know the Popes have been blamed for granting authority to Henry the Second to annex Ireland to his dominions; but who is to blame for keeping Ireland subject to the British crown these seven hundred years? Is it the Pope’s Bulls, which at best were but a mere pretext? And there were others besides; for instance, one Irish chief soliciting aid to destroy another. Is it those hybrid things, half man half fiends, called Orangemen, children of the devil, spawn of hell, sent into this world to violate the laws of nature and of God, a disgrace to the age, their country and civilization?

“ Yelling monsters, that with ceaseless cry  
 Surround their mother, hourly conceived  
 And hourly born, with sorrow infinite  
 To her ; for when they list, into the womb  
 That bred them they return, and howl and gnaw  
 Her bowels their repast.”

Is it this faction of cowardly British Thugs, a mere handful, who would be crushed beneath the heels of an indignant people, like the worm that crawls, were they all that stood between slavery and freedom? Is this the faction that keeps Ireland annexed to England? is it English soldiers or Englishmen? I say no! a thousand times, no! For, though these are auxiliaries, they could never keep a united Ireland, with all her natural advantages and brave sons, in chains and bondage. No! never, never! Who then holds Ireland for the English? I will tell you. It is the men who put themselves forward as leaders, and prove base and sell her, or cowardly and pusillanimous, refuse to adopt the only means that will break her chains and free her spirit and enterprise. [*Loud cheers.*] It is the Judases, who would sell the Lord in His own temple, and who sell their country as Esau sold his birthright, who barter their manhood, if they ever had any, for a title, or semi or demi, (or whatever you choose to call it) royal smile. Who have brought Ireland, with their damnable inventions, to what even they must acknowledge she is to-day, or soon will be, a land of beggars and snobs? It is they who have so long turned the minds, the energy, the generous and confiding nature of the Irish people, into a foul stream. The pure waters that would irrigate the nation and nourish the buds of Liberty and Independence, have been corrupted with their doctrines, their selfishness and their beggarly arrogance, looking down upon the poor man as the LOWER ORDERS, God save the mark, [*laughter and cheers,*] who are *charitably* supposed to have no capabilities to direct and rule a nation, and only fit to be cajoled and humbugged, Sadliered and Keoghed, domineered over and betrayed, hunted or starved. [*Loud and long-continued cheers.*]

Oh, my beautiful and insufferable snobs and toadies, your game is up; your tricks are known, and the people you have so long deceived, will lay the corner-stone of a great and enduring nation,

and will use no such bricks as you in the structure, until you are first purified in the fires which shall regenerate your native land. [*Immense cheers.*]

It is hard to speak thus of men of my own race and land; would to God I and every honest man were spared the recital; but I am here to utter the truth, and I will speak it; let others speak to please one side or another, I raise my voice for Ireland and her cause to-day, [*loud cheers.*] and if I cannot give utterance to honest sentiments in public, I will nurse my contempt and derision in private, for the base tools who aspire only to betray. [*Great cheering.*] Yes, these pretended friends of Ireland have too long deceived the people, and betrayed their country; they have time and again depicted Ireland's wrongs and sufferings in vivid colors, and thundered forth their anathemas against British tyranny in forcible and seemingly sincere language, and then when a trusting and hopeful people looked to them for a remedy, lo and behold the panacea they recommend is a little office ointment rubbed on the heads of themselves and their friends; and although the foul ulcers that were eating out the life of the nation, and beyond the healing power of all remedies, except that of the sword, these PATRIOTS assert that the disease was not so bad as they at one time supposed, and that a little tenant-right lotion, with some Manooth and Queen's College tincture of gold, would restore the patient to perfect health again. [*Derisive cheers.*] Oh, most wicked and impotent conclusion, to think that a small fraction of that wealth which England is draining from your country year after year, and day after day, will, on being flung back to you as a favor, invigorate the exhausted resources of the nation. Oh, most farcical and impudent assertion, to say that the malignant cancer which must be cut out altogether, root and branch, seed and nurture, if you would save the patient's life, will heal of its own accord, by applying a little pension salve, washed with a little no-Popery lotion, to prevent irritation. [*Great cheers.*]

Is Parliamentary agitation, and such despicable juggling, going to give liberty or justice to Ireland, when to do so would be giving up a part of the very foundation upon which the British governmental structure is raised? Is the blood and treasure which



England draws from Ireland, and which she requires to supply the drain upon her own resources, so as to keep the English people from discontent and revolution, going to be relinquished, through fear of big words and threatening speeches? Are any or all of these methods going to loosen the jaws of the hungry beast whose teeth have been sinking deeper and deeper into the very vitals of the nation, until now there remains but one sound artery through which the blood and hopes of our race flow pure and true, the Fenian Brotherhood? [*Enthusiastic cheering.*] We are tired of shams, we are sick of cant, we stretch forth our arms across the Atlantic, and grasping a brother's hand of every creed, Catholic, Episcopalian, Presbyterian, Jews, Turks, if there are such beings in Ireland; aye, even those of repentant Orangemen, (for the Son of God forgave his murderers,) *and swear, by the blood that has been shed, and the victims that have suffered, by the sacred dust in which the bones of her martyrs lie, dishonored and unavenged, by the millions of nameless dead, who, from the first, have suffered for her and nourished with their blood the soil they so fondly loved, by every hope that men can cherish, and angels give, Ireland shall be free, and we must free her.* [*Long and enthusiastic cheers again and again, and cries of "we are with you, we are with you."*]

You have begged long enough, you have prayed, you have coaxed, you have fawned until you have made freemen all over the earth despise you; you have flattered until your sycophancy became disgusting to friend and foe alike. You have tried all these and failed, miserably failed, and now there is not a heart throb left in the nation that you can revive with your poisonous drugs and quack nostrums. Now, step aside and let the earnest sons of toil, the bone and sinew of the land, the true representatives of the men who fought at Limerick, Benburb and Fontenoy; let them see what they can do now. You have been tried in the balance and found wanting. We will step into the scales and be weighed. [*Loud cheers.*] You have tried clods, we will try what virtue there is in rifles instead of Parliamentary protests. We will try powder and ball, the sword shall now be the arbiter of her destinies and her children, and may God defend the right. [*Vehement cheering.*] If we fail once with honor in a noble fight, we will try again and

again ; blood must wash out what blood and crime has stained.  
*[Loud cheers.]*

I would not destroy the life of a fly without a necessity ; neither would I sacrifice the life of a human being without an adequate cause ; but brave men are not afraid to die, and what holier cause did man ever fight for than freedom ? what death more glorious than that of the patriot-soldier who dies for his country and his race ?

“To live in hearts we leave behind, is not to die.”

I have seen more sickening sights than any beheld on the battle-field ; the ghastly skeletons of what were once God's creatures, fair and comely, and strong, shriveled into skin and bone from starvation, and piled in heaps, with a little straw for a shroud, waiting to be pitched into a common hole, “unwept, unhonored, and unsung ;” this was death—this was murder. To be sure there was no blood spiled, for the gaunt demon of hunger consumed it before he destroyed the victim immolated on the altar of British law. There was no flesh mangled, unless what the rats or the starving infant eat from its mother's breast. There was no property destroyed or taken, for they died on the road-side, eating grass or roots, unable or unwilling to touch the turnips that grew so tempting inside the hedge, although I knew of one case where a poor starving wretch was sentenced to imprisonment for three months, for eating them out of the vessel that the GENTLEMEN'S cows were feeding from ; and yet GOOD men, HONORABLE men, RESPECTABLE men, say “Peace, peace,” when there is no peace ; they say “All is well,” when all is ill, and blaspheme God's holy name by attributing to His will the work of their own hands and that of their accomplices. *[Loud and vehement cheers were given, again and again.]*



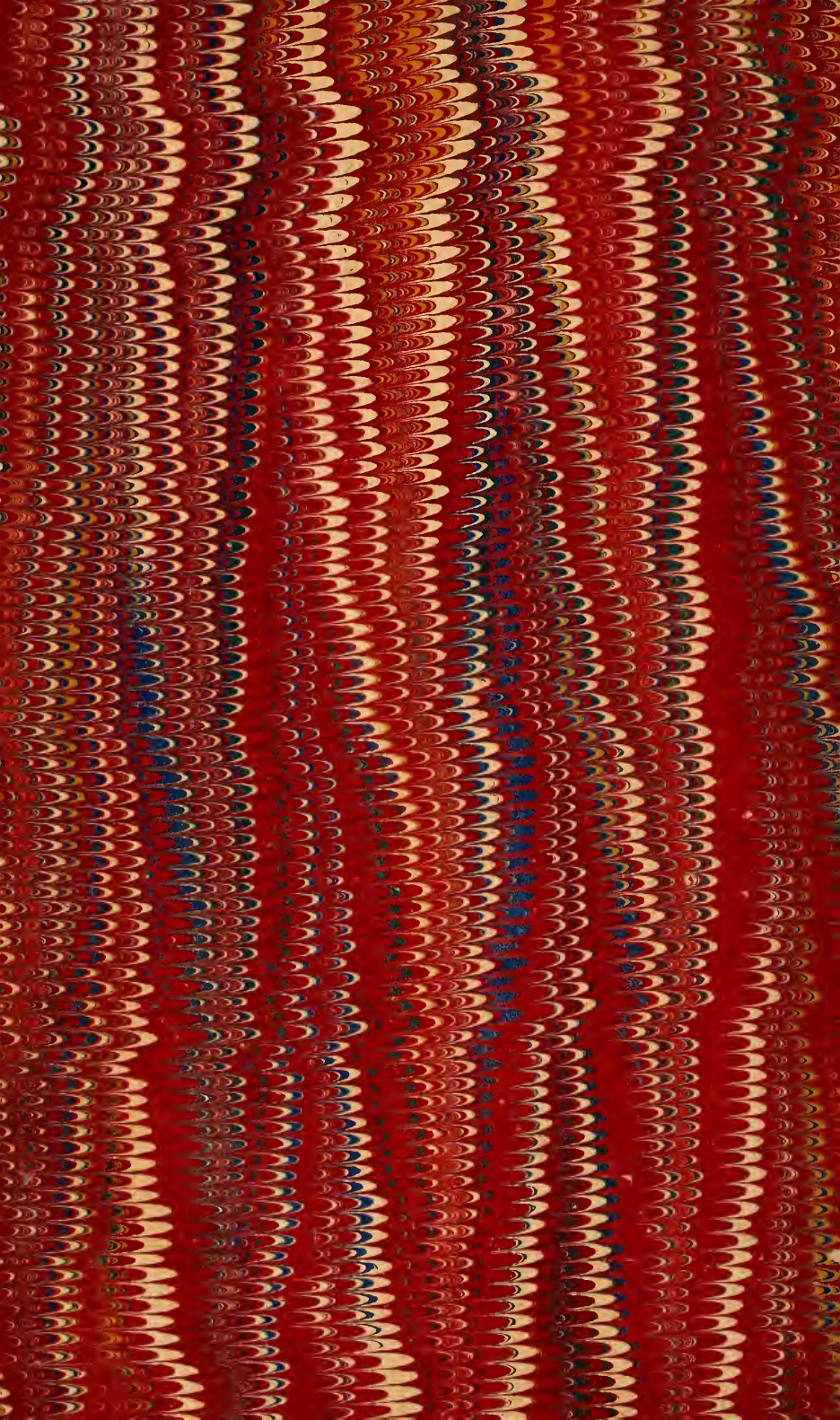


















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